

## Education

The education of our youth is an essential investment in our collective future. Our children represent our future and in order to prepare them for fulfilling lives, we must provide them with a strong academic foundation. Their success, and that of our nation, is dependent on a national commitment to education.

Too often, the federal government has not lived up to its responsibilities to provide students and schools with the funding it has promised. We need to refocus our attention on making the United States a leader in education. Our children need the best schools, the best teachers and the best resources in order to tap into the limitless potential of our youngest generation. Education should be viewed as vital to our economic and, indeed, our national security.

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

NCLB has drawn mixed reviews over its effectiveness and fairness since its enactment in 2002. Many of the provisions were rigid and unyielding and the legislation was not fully funded. We need an education law that treats schools and children fairly, that provides educators and administrators with the flexibility they need to meet high standards, and which delivers to schools the resources they need to improve and succeed.

A draft of the NCLB reauthorization was recently released by the House Committee on Education and Labor to give schools more flexibility by allowing them to use multiple indicators, instead of just reading and math test scores when judging their annual yearly progress (AYP). The draft is a work in progress as the Education and Labor Committee

continues to meet with teachers and education groups to receive feedback.

#### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

When Congress passed IDEA in 1975, the federal government required states to provide a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities and committed to pay 40 percent of the cost of educating students with disabilities. States and localities were to pay the rest.

The federal government hasn't come close to fulfilling its obligation and is in fact only providing approximately half of the promised amount today. This shortfall places an onerous financial burden on many local communities who must find alternate resources, such as higher property taxes, to fund special education.

To rectify this situation, Rep. Eshoo is an original cosponsor of H.R. 526, the Full Funding for IDEA Now Act. This legislation would amend IDEA to ensure that the federal government always meets its obligation to states, localities, students and their families.

#### Higher Education

The House recently passed the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 to provide new protections, in addition to those in current law, to ensure that families can continue to access the loans they need to pay for college, especially in a time where housing foreclosures and other household expenses are on the rise.

Congress recently passed, and the President signed into law, the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007, important legislation to reduce the cost of higher education. The legislation provides the single largest increase in student aid since the G.I. Bill by:

- Increasing the Pell Grant maximum to \$5,400 by 2012;
- Cutting interest rates on need-based federal student loans will in half;
- Offering loan forgiveness to public service workers after ten years of loan payments;
- Providing \$4,000-\$16,000 up-front tuition assistance to undergraduate students who commit to teaching in high-need public schools.

These programs are paid for by decreasing lender subsidies by \$20.9 billion over five years.

The House also passed the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008, the comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The bill addresses the soaring price of college, and removes other obstacles that make it harder for qualified students to go to college. It restores integrity and accountability to the student loan programs, simplifies the federal student aid application process, makes textbook costs more manageable, and boosts campus safety and disaster readiness plans.

## Education for the 21st Century

California's 14th Congressional District is situated in the heart of Silicon Valley and is at the vanguard of the economy of the 21st Century. A 2005 report of the National Academy and Sciences (NAS) entitled, "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," examined America's top needs to remain competitive in the global economy. Improving our education in math, science, and engineering to meet the needs of this economy was at the top of the list. This issue has also been a theme of several other major reports on America's economic future.

Rep. Eshoo has also been a leader in the development of the Innovation Agenda, a plan put forward by House Democrats to ensure America remains competitive in the global economy of the 21st Century. Among the goals of the agenda are to:

- Educate 100,000 new scientists, engineers, and mathematicians in the next four years by proposing a new initiative, working with states, businesses, and universities, to provide scholarships to qualified students who commit to working in the fields of innovation.
  
- Place a highly qualified teacher in every math and science K-12 classroom by offering upfront tuition assistance to talented undergraduates and by paying competitive salaries to established teachers working in the fields of math and science; institute a "call to action" to professional engineers and scientists, including those who have retired, to join the ranks of our nation's teachers.
  
- Create a special visa for the best and brightest international doctoral and postdoctoral scholars in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.
  
- Make college tuition tax-deductible for students studying math, science, technology, and engineering.

For more information about Rep. Eshoo's commitment to improving America's education in the high-tech fields, read about the Democrat's Innovation Agenda.

## Head Start

A solid education begins with a strong foundation. In 1965, Head Start was created to lay that foundation for low-income children. Head Start provides health, education and nutritional information to prepare children for kindergarten.

In May 2007, Rep. Eshoo voted for, and the House passed, H.R. 1429, the Improving Head Start Act, to reauthorize and improve Head Start through fiscal year 2012. The bill will expand access to Head Start and improve program quality so that more children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed.

## Rebuilding Our Schools

Under the Administration's No Child Left Behind proposals, strong emphasis was placed on raising standards in America's classrooms, but the program ignored the fact that school facilities are an important part of raising student performance. Poor facilities make teaching and learning more difficult. Rep. Eshoo is an original cosponsor of H.R. 2470, America's Better Classroom Act of 2007. This legislation will provide approximately \$25 billion in interest-free bonds for school construction and renovation.

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